



MARTHA COAKLEY
ATTORNEY GENERAL

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
ONE ASHBURTON PLACE
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02108

(617) 727-2200
(617) 727-4765 TTY
www.mass.gov/ago

COMMISSION TO REVIEW
STATUTES RELATIVE TO
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
SCHOOL BULLYING LAW

Attorney General
Martha Coakley, Chair

District Attorney
David Capeless
Massachusetts District Attorney's
Association

Sheriff Michael Bellotti
Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association

Michael Long, Esq.
Massachusetts Association of School
Superintendents

Mary Lyons, Police Chief,
Mattapoisett, MA
Massachusetts Chiefs of Police
Association

Ms. Laura Salomons, Member
Sharon School Committee
Massachusetts Association of School
Committees

Mr. Steve Clem
Association of Independent Schools in
New England

COMMISSION

Created pursuant to Section 18 of
Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010

Commission Meeting
Monday June 21, 2010
20th floor, 1 Ashburton Place
10:00 am-11:00 am

Chair: Martha Coakley, Massachusetts Attorney General

Note Taker: Mary Sullivan, Attorney General's Office

Agenda Setting: No new issues were added to previously-issued
agenda

Commission Members Attending (All Commission Members in Attendance):

Martha Coakley, Massachusetts Attorney General
Michael Bellotti, Sheriff, Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association
David Capeless, Berkshire County District Attorney
Steve Clem, Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools in
New England
Michael Long, General Counsel, Massachusetts Association of School
Superintendents
Mary Lyons, Police Chief, Mattapoisett, MA Massachusetts Chiefs of
Police Association
Laura Salomons, School Committee Member, Sharon, MA,
Massachusetts Association of School Committees

Others in Attendance:

Sheila Calkins, Chief of Staff, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
Nora Mann, Chief, Community Information & Education Division,
Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
Mary Sullivan, Deputy Director, Community Information & Education
Division, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
Geline Williams, Executive Director, Massachusetts District Attorneys'
Association

Meeting Summary:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Review of the three charges of the Commission:
 1. Review the General Laws to determine if they need to be amended in order to address bullying and cyber-bullying;
 2. Investigate parental responsibility and liability for bullying and cyber-bullying; and
 3. Report to the general court the results of its investigation and study and its recommendations, if any, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry out such recommendations ... on or before June 30, 2011.
- Discussion of new bullying prevention legislation:
 - Review of components of new law.
<http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/seslaw10/sl100092.htm>
 - Bullying prevention is not just a school problem – it is a community problem – and requires a paradigm shift (new norms) for all stakeholders in order to create change.
 - How to include entire community? Question – how to create a way to collect input from all interested parties?
 - Commission should also look at existing data on bullying.
 - School administrators are anxious about how to be up to speed on new law by fall.
 - Schools need help differentiating new law vs. hazing vs. hate crimes.
 - Intent of new law is to strengthen schools' ability to (and responsibility to) deal with/prevent bullying.
 - Many Commission members reported sharp increase in inquiries received (from their constituencies) about new law.
 - Reminder that the bill is to prevent bullying – to intervene when bullying is suspected – to use appropriate disciplinary actions to stop further incidents- and to get child(ren) help to be safe.
 - Need to educate schools, parents, communities that the new law did not criminalize bullying, but rather set forth new requirements (which include requiring schools to respond to bullying and to notify parents, train staff, etc.) around bullying.
 - Many school administrators report that they will need additional training/awareness of how to implement requirements of new law.
 - Local law enforcement can help educate schools/parents about existing laws/existing mechanisms for response. Very helpful to have an SRO (School Resource Officer) on site. Budgetary cutbacks have resulted in fewer SROs in schools.
 - There is good existing infrastructure (such as those for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect – 51A) which can be utilized for new reporting requirements for suspected bullying.
 - There may be potential for spike in reports, at first. Concern that resources of schools and local law enforcement may be strained as a result.
 - Commission would like to hear from students, parents, law enforcement and schools – both on their experiences and also on recommendations going forward.
 - DESE (Department of Early and Secondary Education) is writing model policy and

will be issuing regulations for schools – pursuant to the new law. Currently in draft form, will be circulating for comment shortly.

- Question if Commission might also look at DESE Regulations – as related to bullying – to see if any need for revisions.
- Schools will need to have developmentally appropriate educational plan and response based on age of the child.
- Crucial to have parental involvement throughout – and for all parties.
- Hope that all parties will not “throw common sense out the window” – i.e. response will be commensurate with incident.
- Discussion of recent new laws (civil restraining orders and updating stalking/harassment law to include phone calls) and public’s confusion of these laws with bullying prevention legislation.
- Leverage existing communication channels – such as CBJ (Community Based Justice) meetings to support communication between schools and law enforcement – to intervene early in bullying – support action on a preventative level.

- **Next Steps and Person(s) Responsible:**

- Set next meeting date – late September, 2010 – Nora Mann
- Gather most recent YRBS (Youth Risk Behavior Survey) data related to bullying – Mary Sullivan
- Create mechanism for receiving public comments/input regarding the charges of the Commission (via mail and via electronic transmission) – Nora Mann
- Draft list of individuals (representing law enforcement, schools, parents and students, and other interested parties) who may be invited to give testimony to the Commission – and circulate to Commission for comments - Mary Sullivan
- Begin to gather information on current laws – in order for Commission to begin to identify potential need for revision/updating – Nora Mann.

- **Materials Distributed at the Meeting (attached):**

- Agenda
- Bullying Prevention Law
- PowerPoint slides – Review of existing laws
- Contact Information for Commission Members